computer readable means for analyzing said aggregate sales data based on said market basket groupings and determining if any of said market basket groupings display characteristics identified by said analysis parameters; and

computer readable means for enhancing said aggregate sales data concerning each market basket grouping by embedding in said aggregate sales data an "imaginary item" for each characteristic(s) displayed by each market basket grouping, for all market basket groupings which have been determined to display said characteristics.

7. The computer program product as set forth in claim 6, further comprising:

computer readable means for performing association analysis on said enhanced market basket grouping data to generate association rules and frequent itemsets; and

computer readable means for displaying and archiving said association rules and frequent itemsets.

8. The computer program product as set forth in claim 7, further comprising:

computer readable means for processing said association rules and frequent itemsets to develop conclusions about said marketing research data.

9. The computer program product as set forth in claim 7, wherein said aggregate sales data comprises merchandise information, said merchandise information including:

an identification element identifying each sold item;

transactional information corresponding to each sold item; and

financial information corresponding to each sold item; and wherein said merchandise information is input to a merchandise taxonomy to establish logical links between said identification elements, said transactional information, and said financial information so that said merchandise information can be utilized for market basket analysis.

10. The computer program product as set forth in claim 9, wherein said aggregate sales data comprises computer readable means for linking the merchandise information of each sold item in a particular market basket to all other items in said particular market basket.

11. A system of processing market research data including aggregate sales data concerning items grouped in a plurality of market baskets and sold during retail sales transactions of a retailer, said system comprising:

means for receiving analysis parameters from said retailer for use in analyzing said market research data;

means for receiving said aggregate sales data;

means for analyzing said aggregate sales data based on said market basket groupings and determining if any of said market basket groupings display characteristics identified by said analysis parameters; and

means for enhancing said aggregate sales data concerning each market basket grouping by embedding in said aggregate sales data an "imaginary item" for each characteristic(s) displayed by each market basket grouping for all market basket groupings which have been determined to display said characteristics.

12. The system as set forth in claim 11, wherein said system further comprises:

means for performing association analysis on said enhanced market basket grouping data to generate association rules and frequent itemsets; and

means for displaying and archiving said association rules and frequent itemsets.

13. The system as set forth in claim 12, further comprising:

means for processing said association rules and frequent itemsets to develop conclusions about said marketing research data.

14. The system as set forth in claim 12, wherein said aggregate sales data comprises merchandise information, said merchandise information including:

an identification element identifying each sold item;

transactional information corresponding to each sold item; and

financial information corresponding to each sold item; and wherein said merchandise information is input to a merchandise taxonomy to establish logical links between said identification elements, said transactional information, and said financial information so that said merchandise information can be utilized for market basket analysis.

15. The system as set forth in claim 14, wherein said aggregate sales data comprises information linking the merchandise information of each sold item in a particular market basket to all other items in said particular market basket.--